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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CONAKRY 000538

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SUBJECT: GUINEA'S JUNTA LEADER ANNOUNCES PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDACY

REF: A. CONAKRY 507
[1](#)B. BROKENSHERE-SCOTT 9/02 E-MAIL

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Kent C. Brokenshire for Reason 1.
4 B/D

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The leader of Guinea's military junta, Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, told the ICG-G September 3 that he would present himself as a candidate in Guinea's presidential elections expected in January 2010. The surprise announcement came after Dadis compelled the Contact Group to attend a well-orchestrated rally at the People's Palace at which hundreds of supporters called on Dadis to present his candidacy. The announcement, which Dadis claimed was in response to the demands of the people, stunned the contact group and threw into question the future of international assistance for Guinea's electoral process. ECOWAS Chairman Mohamed Chambas intends to seek the intervention of neighboring heads of state to talk Dadis back from his announcement, and requested US assistance in arranging the meeting. End Summary.

DADIS HIJACKS THE CONTACT GROUP

[1](#)2. (C) The International Contact Group for Guinea (ICG-G) arrived in country September 2 fully expecting that its upcoming meeting with the head of Guinea's military junta, Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara, would provide a critical turning point in Guinea's upcoming presidential and legislative elections (Ref A). In two gatherings of key ICG-G players just prior to the formal opening of the Contact Group's discussions with the government, it was determined that the two main issues that required immediate attention were the mandate and makeup of the National Transition Council (CNT) and the question of Dadis' candidacy. The CNT was supposed to adjust the constitution and electoral code to provide a legal basis for elections. Dadis, however, had swollen its ranks to 260 members, to the point that its own unwieldiness was likely to become an obstacle to elections, perhaps by design.

[1](#)3. (U) Following morning meetings with the Forces Vives, and later with the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs (MATAP), the ICG was invited to meet with Dadis in one of the smaller presidential palaces in downtown Conakry. However as the ICG-G motorcade made its way through the city following a police motorcycle, it became apparent that the final destination was Le Palais du Peuple, an imposing building that normally houses the National Assembly, but has been used by Dadis to hold boisterous rallies.

[1](#)4. (U) After the 26-member ICG-G was taken to a waiting room, sources informed us that Dadis was packing the halls of the National Assembly chamber with supporters. When the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister appeared, ECOWAS chairman

Mohamed Chambas informed them that the ICG-G had come to speak to Dadis behind closed doors and did not wish to be paraded through a pre-staged political rally. Negotiations went back and forth for several minutes until Dadis himself suddenly appeared at the head of a squad heavily armed soldiers, demanding to know why he, a Head of State, was being kept waiting. He then went on the scold the ICG-G, claiming it had failed to show him the proper respect. He demanded that the ICG-G follow him and 'meet the people.' AU Special Representative Inbrahima Fall threw up his hands and acquiesced.

"I WILL BE A CANDIDATE"

15. (U) Some three or four hundred people in the audience broke into applause when Dadis appeared on the brightly-lit stage. For an hour he spoke to the crowd, his voice sometimes rising to a squeak but more often roaring on about his honesty and willingness to sacrifice himself for Guinea. The parade of platitudes that followed need not be detailed here, but they sent six of the nine GoG dignitaries seated behind Dadis to sleep within a few minutes, including the Prime Minister. When Dadis touched on the transition, he shouted to the audience, "Who do you want to lead Guinea into the future?" The audience yelled back "Dadis, Dadis." He then ceded the microphone to two individuals who pleaded for Dadis to remain at the helm of the country and not abandon Guinea.

16. (U) When Dadis finally met the ICG-G behind closed doors, ECOWAS Chair Chambas delivered a carefully prepared message

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that praised some of the government's election successes, including the disbursement of election funds and a recent decision to limit overseas voting to 17 countries. He also discussed the challenges of the CNT. On the topic of a possible Dadis candidacy, Chambas said that Dadis could not be both a referee and a player on the field. He warned that if he attempted to pursue both roles it would cast serious doubt on the credibility of elections. Dadis heard the entire message because it was delivered in English and Dadis' English is limited. However, when the translator repeated the message in French, Dadis cut her off just as she was elaborating on the separate rolls of referees and players. "This is all blah, blah, blah," said Dadis with a wave of his hand. "Didn't the President of Mauritania launch a coup and then run for office?"

17. (U) Wearing dark glasses in the dimly-lit room, Dadis claimed he is a victim of discrimination; that both de Gaulle and Eisenhower were military officers who became president, while he - Dadis - is being denied this possibility. He reminded the members of the Contact Group that the women and youth of Guinea are screaming for his candidacy, and that the only thing standing between him and running for office was the ICG-G. He said, "But I will listen to what they say. I will tell you right now I will be a candidate. I was not born wearing a military uniform. I will take it off and respect the aspirations of the people."

THE COMMUNIQUE

18. (U) The Contact group was clearly stunned by the first announcement in French. It wasn't until the English translation was pronounced did members finally realize they had not misunderstood Dadis. Dadis confirmed his candidacy several additional times during the meeting. When the ICG-G regrouped in the conference room of a downtown hotel it was 10 PM. By 2 AM the group had discussed, drafted and edited a communique stating that the issue of non-candidacy of members of the ruling of the military junta had reached an impasse that threatened the partnership between the ICG-G and the

GoG. It deplored a lack of consensus on the CNT, as well as recent government attempts to curb freedom of expression of citizens, the media, and political parties. Though Charge, the French and Spanish Ambassador argued for clearer, more robust language, other ICG-G members feared that a terse communique released before the government officially announced Dadis' candidacy could spark street violence and a sharp government backlash.

ICG-G AND NEXT MOVES

¶9. (C) ICG-G members agreed to consult with their home governments before attempting to formulate any new common strategies. The Conakry-based element of the ICG-G will convene in the next week or so to review options. Following the final draft of the communique ECOWAS Chair Chambas told the group that the time had come to introduce a credible head of state into the picture, someone who could talk Dadis back from his decision to run for president. He believed Wade of Senegal, Compaore or Burkina Faso or ATT of Mali would be effective interlocutors. The Foreign Minister of Liberia, a member of this ICG-G, offered President Johnson Sirleaf. Chambas took Charge aside and asked for US assistance in persuading either Wade, Compaore or ATT to step up and engage with Dadis. He said he had made the same request to the French Ambassador.

COMMENT:

¶10. (C) Charge suspects that Dadis did not intend to announce his candidacy to the ICG-G, that it would have served his purposes better to have waited several more weeks or months. However, he appeared to have been carried away on the wings of his own words to the point that he prematurely divulged his intentions to the Contact Group. The Guineans in the room with us, the PM and FM and half a dozen military officers, appeared equally taken aback and apparently forgot to clap following Dadis' oral delivery as is their custom.

¶11. (C) Our immediate concern at this point is the potential reaction of the local population to Dadis' candidacy. A number of sources in the past have told us the population is likely to take to the streets following any announcement of

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candidacy. However, more recent discussions with contacts suggest that people may be increasingly reluctant to put themselves at risk. Since Dadis' announcement was made behind closed doors, the news does not appear to have circulated widely. There have been a few random press reports, but RTG (the national television/radio station) has been surprisingly silent on the subject. The GoG/CNDD have not made any statement about the meeting, nor of Dadis' announcement. The Forces Vives have also been silent. The eventual public reaction will be a strong indicator of the likely trajectory of Guinea's transition process.

¶12. (C) Embassy will discuss in Septel a range of options for Department consideration to address this new development. In the meantime, Embassy continues to monitor the security situation.

BROKENSHIRE